

## **Indiana Department of Environmental Management**

**Lori F. Kaplan, Commissioner**

### ***Earth Day 2002***

America awoke from its environmental slumber three decades ago when the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland caught fire. Water on fire defied logic, but this incident, probably more than any other single event, ignited today's environmental awareness movement. Gov. Frank O'Bannon has proclaimed Saturday, April 27, as Earth Day Indiana in our great state, offering Hoosiers the opportunity to renew and strengthen their bond with their environment.

The environment consistently ranks near the top of issues important to Americans. The Gallup Poll has traditionally sampled Americans' views about the environment several weeks before Earth Day. This year's annual survey, which Gallup took during the first week in March, showed that seven in 10 Americans are either active in or sympathetic to the environmental issues.

Hoosiers are no different. All of us need clean air, land and water to survive, grow and prosper. Since the inception of the Indiana Department of Environmental Management 16 years ago, our state has made steady, notable progress in cleaning up and protecting its air, land and waters. While state government may point the way toward environmental responsibility, it is up to every Hoosier to embrace this stewardship for themselves, their families and, most importantly, future generations.

So, what can you do to improve our environment?

You can begin at home by recycling. Even after a decade of extensive public education and outreach, IDEM estimates that only four out of every 10 or about 2.4 million Hoosiers recycles. That's good, but not good enough for a state of 6 million residents. Everyone needs to recycle, and I challenge all Hoosiers not recycling today to join the rest of us to preserve our natural resources through source reduction, reuse and recycling.

Think before you pour or toss. All of us use paints, household cleaners and aerosols around our homes. These products contain chemicals potentially harmful to our environment. There is an alternative to pouring product leftovers down the drain or tossing empty containers into the trash. Contact your local solid waste management district to learn how to safely dispose of these products. Look in your phone book for the number of your local SWMD.

Lastly, get out of your vehicle. Walk or ride a bike to do at least one errand a week or if you live in rural Indiana, consolidate several errands into a single trip. Our vehicles remain the largest, single source of air pollution today in America and Indiana and contribute greatly to harmful ground-level ozone levels during the summer months. The key to cutting vehicle emissions is not turning the ignition key.

Of course, Indiana's corporate citizens must play a role, too. Since the early 1990s, Indiana manufacturers have reduced by 56 percent the amount of toxic chemicals they release into the

environment and included this decrease in pollution in the Toxic Release Inventory. Congress mandated this annual report in 1986 through the Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act. Besides getting important information into the public's hands, it enables Indiana to track its progress in cleaning up our environment.